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Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 IGA-02 /095 W
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R 101515Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1732
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 1232

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CG, PGOV
SUBJECT: LEGISLATORS DENOUNCE REGIME

REF: KINSHASA 0526

SUMMARY:
1. ZAIRE'S LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (LEGCO), A MARGINAL INSTITUTION WHOSE MEMBERS WERE HANDPICKED BY MOBUTU AND THE MPR AND WHICH NORMALLY RATIFIES GOVERNMENT BILLS WITHOUT HESITATION, RESEMBLED ITS MORE TUMULTUOUS PREDECESSORS LAST WEEK AS DEPUTIES REFUSED TO APPROVE THE EXECUTIVE'S PROPOSED LEGISLATION AND ENGAGED IN A GENERAL CONDEMNATION OF THE MOBUTU REGIME. END SUMMARY.

2. THE FINAL WEEK OF THE CURRENT LEGCO SESSION BEGAN WITH THE PRESENTATION BY THE MINISTER OF FINANCE OF THE FINAL ACCOUNTING OF GOZ EXPENDITURES FOR 1974. DENOUNCING THE FIGURES ON SUBSTANTIAL OVERSPENDING BY THE PRESIDENCY, THE LEGCO MEMBERS REJECTED THE REPORT AND THEN LISTENED ATTENTIVELY AS HIGH-LEVEL OFFICIALS OF THE UNION NATIONALE DES TRAVAILLEURS DU ZAIRE (UNTZA) DEPLORED REGIONAL POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DETERIORATION.

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3. WHAT WAS SCHEDULED TO BE THE FINAL LEGCO MEETING ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 4, RESULTED IN THE MEMBERS' REFUSAL TO APPROVE EXECUTIVE PROPOSALS FOR TAX INCREASES WITHOUT FURTHER DISCUSSION. A SUPPLEMENTARY SESSION WAS HELD ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5, AND BEGAN WITH ONE DEPUTY'S REQUEST, LOUDLY APPLAUDED BY HIS COLLEAGUES, THAT THE LEGCO PRESIDENT EXPEL FROM THE MEETING ALL MEMBERS OF THE POLITICAL BUREAU, WHO WERE QUALIFIED AS TRAITORS

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FOR HAVING SOLD THEMSELVES TO THE REGIME. WHEN HIS REQUEST WAS DENIED, THE DEPUTY AND THREE OF HIS COLLEAGUES SUCCESSIVELY TOOK THE FLOOR TO PRESENT COMMITTEE REPORTS WHICH FLAYED THE REGIME FOR WHAT A DEPUTY FROM MOBUTU'S HOME DISTRICT CHOSE TO CALL THE "SUICIDE OF ZAIRE". SPECIFICALLY CRITICIZED WERE:

-- THE TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATION FOR OPPRESSING THE LOCAL POPULATION WITH THE FULL KNOWLEDGE OF THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP;
-- ECONOMIC MISMANGEMENT AND CORRUPTION WHICH HAVE DESTROYED ZAIRE'S PROSPERITY;
-- REGIME POLICIES WHICH HAVE SAPPED THE VITALITY OF SUCH ORGANIZATIONS AS THE UNTZA AND THE SCHOOLS.

THE ASSEMBLY THEN APPROVED BY ACCLAMATION A RESOLUTION CALLING UPON THE LEGCO PRESIDENT TO DELIVER A COPY OF EACH OF THE FOUR REPORTS TO MOBUTU. AS THE FINAL ACT OF THE CURRENT SESSION, THE LEGCO AGAIN REFUSED TO APPROVE THE TAX INCREASE.

4. COMMENT: ONE SOURCE OF THE ABOVE INFORMATION HAS SUGGESTED THAT THE DEPUTIES, CONVINCED THAT THE REGIME IS CRUMBLING, WERE TRYING TO ESTABLISH SOME DISTANCE FROM MOBUTU IN ORDER TO ENHANCE THEIR PROSPECTS OF PROSPERING UNDER HIS SUCCESSOR. OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE LEGCO'S OUTBURST IS THAT IT REFLECTS:

-- THE CURRENT POLITICAL MALAISE INDICATED BY GROWING DOUBTS AMONG ELITES OVER THE REGIME'S ABILITY TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH THE ECONOMIC CRISIS;
-- THE MEMBERS' RESENTMENT OF THEIR POLITICAL IMPOTENCE (EXECUTIVE ORDERS WILL REPLACE THE LEGISLATION THEY TRIED TO BLOCK) AND OF MOBUTU'S DECISION IN DECEMBER TO STRIP THEM OF THEIR STIPENDS EXCEPT FOR THE BRIEF PERIODS

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WHEN THEY ARE IN SESSION;
-- THEIR CONVICTION THAT THE PROPOSED TAX INCREASE (ON WHICH WE HAVE FEW DETAILS) WOULD PLACE TOO GREAT A BURDEN ON THE HARD-PRESSED PUBLIC; AND
-- THEIR BELIEF THAT THEY ARE NOT THREATENED BY SEVERE REPRISALS, A REMINDER THAT THE SYSTEM, FOR ALL ITS DEFECTS, COULD BE FAR MORE OPPRESSIVE.

WHILE NOT INSIGNIFICANT, THE LEGCO'S INDICTMENT OF THE REGIME HAS BEEN KEPT WITHIN INSTITUTIONAL CHANNELS AND CONSEQUENTLY IS LESS THREATENING TO MOBUTU AT PRESENT THAN THE PROSPECT OF LABOR UNREST REPORTED REFTEL.
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